

WALKING TIPS

Walking is an excellent form of exercise for people of all ages and abilities. Start your walking program gradually, increasing length and pace as you get used to it. The following suggestions may help you to incorporate regular walking into your lifestyle.

GENERAL WALKING TIPS

If you have not walked distances for some time, you should start slowly. Increase the length and pace of your walk gradually. Here are some tips on how to get started and how to prepare for walking.

- Warm-up activity – start slowly, do a few warm-up exercises and stretches first. Don't walk immediately after a big meal.
- Build activity slowly – start with a 20-minute walk, then increase gradually. Try to walk at least three times per week.
- Use the correct technique – walk at a steady pace, swing your arms freely, and stand as straight as you can. Your feet should step in a rolling action from the heel to the toe.
- Shoes and socks – wear thick comfortable cotton socks. Sensible, comfortable, and lightweight shoes with support are best.
- Weather – wear suitable warm, light clothing in the winter and cool, comfortable clothes in the summer. Don't forget your sunscreen and hat.
- Water – drink water before and after your walk. Take water with you on your walk, especially in warm weather.
- Cool down – make sure you cool down after a long fast walk. Do a few stretching exercises.
- If you have not exercised for a while, check with your doctor before you start.
- Keep track of the pollen and ozone reports daily. Some days may not be good for walking. You can go to <http://www.co.forsyth.nc.us/EnvAffairs/DlyAirQualRpt.htm> for this information.

CHILDREN

Statistics show that American children are living increasingly sedentary lives. Suggestions on encouraging your children to enjoy regular walks include:

- If your children find television and computer games more interesting than exercise, consider getting a dog. Your children's desire to love and care for the animal may encourage them to take it on regular walks.
- Boost your children's interest in outdoor activities by visiting some of Guilford County's scenic areas and organizing fun activities, such as hiking on trails.
- Encourage your children's interest in nature through books and web sites, then follow up with field trips so they can discover their favorite animals or plants for themselves (and enjoy the health benefits of walking at the same time).
- Schedule a regular family walk – this is a great way to pass on healthy habits to your children and spend time together, while getting fit at the same time.
- When walking with children, make sure the route and length of time spent walking is appropriate for their age.
- Start good habits early. Take young babies and toddlers for walks in their stroller. As they get older, encourage them to walk.

SENIORS

Regular weight-bearing exercise can improve cardiovascular fitness and bone strength, reduce excess body fat, and boost muscle power. Walking is an excellent form of exercise for the elderly, since it is low impact, free, and high in health benefits. See your doctor for a medical check-up before embarking on any new fitness program, particularly if you are overweight, haven't exercised in a long time, or suffer from a chronic medical condition.

WALKING WORKOUT TIPS

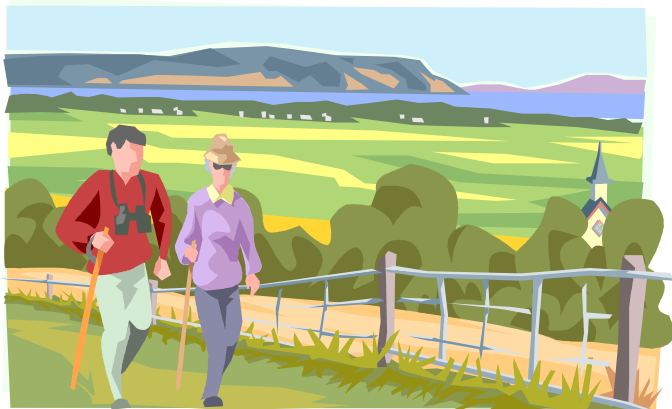
Tips to keep you going

- Add variety by changing your route.
- Take a personal radio, cassette or CD player to listen to—BUT be aware of your surroundings!
- Dress in layers so that you can adjust for weather conditions.
- Walk inside if the weather is bad (too hot, too cold, too wet, too icy).
- Wear a hat and sunscreen in the summer.
- Carry a water bottle.
- Record on a calendar how long you walked and the approximate distance (register yourself in our walking club). This will help to remind you to get at least three days in per week and maintain your progress.



SUGGESTIONS FOR INCREASING DIFFICULTY

- Add timed intervals of moderate to fast pace (i.e. 30 seconds fast - 1 minute moderate).
- As you become stronger, take fewer breaks.
- Increase the time of your brisk walk, provided you have the time.
- Find a route that includes some hills.



COMFORT AND SAFETY TIPS

- If you have been inactive, check with your doctor before beginning any exercise.
- If you cannot walk and talk without becoming breathless, slow down.
- Listen to your body. If you feel pain, dizziness, nausea, or sick in any way, stop exercising. If the symptoms do not subside, consult your doctor.
- Do proper warm-up and cool-down exercises.
- Drink small amounts of water before, during, and after your walk, particularly in warm weather when you are sweating heavily.
- Walk with a friend for pleasure and safety.
- If walking alone, tell someone your route and expected time of return.
- Walk during the day or on well-lit streets.
- Always walk facing the traffic.
- If you miss more than a week, resume your physical activity program at one-half to two-thirds of your normal level and build up gradually.

STAYING MOTIVATED

- The most critical period for sticking with a physical activity program is the first two to four weeks. Plan to maintain your walking program at least a month to give yourself a fair chance of "sticking with it."
- Most people notice favorable changes in about four to eight weeks, if not right away.
- Make specific plans to walk and write them down. Include when, where, with whom, how long, how hard, and how often.
- Add activity to your life. Walk during coffee breaks. Park in the far corners of parking lots and enjoy the walk to where you are going.
- Walk with a friend or dog, and you will be encouraged to walk even on those days when you feel "lazy!" Encourage family members to walk with you.
- Try a daily positive walking affirmation to repeat to yourself such as "Walking makes me look great and feel great!"
- Keep an exercise log and plot your progress.
- Vary your walking route, the setting you walk in, or your walking partner to add variety and interest.
- If you slip off the program, forgive yourself and begin again. Don't give up and avoid the all or none pitfall.
- Reward yourself. Each month, particularly for the first six months, reward yourself for sticking with your walking program goals.
- Take a mental vacation. Use your walking time to think about pleasant things. Avoid using the time to ponder family problems or bills. It is essential to feel good about what you are doing.



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